



Sermon, Sunday August 7, 2022 “The Message of the Cross”

SCRIPTURE: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 ¹⁸For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” ²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of the proclamation, to save those who believe. ²²For Jews ask for signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

Introduction: A life lived by faith in the Lord, not by seeking answers in life

Today's text is Paul's exhortation for the Corinthians. The people of the Corinthian church described in 1 Corinthians were worldly prominent people. They had a lot of money and a lot of talent. They also lived in a proud Greek culture. Furthermore, they tried to display their noble status.

To these Corinthians, the Apostle Paul preaches 'the message of the cross'. People are divided into those who accept the power of the cross and those who do not accept the power of the cross. At that time, Greek civilization had developed philosophy and logic, so it was difficult for people to understand 'the message of the cross'. Therefore, 'the message of the cross' was treated as foolishness by the Corinthians.

The Apostle Paul understood this attitude of the people because the Apostle Paul lived with such thoughts himself until he met Jesus. However, the Apostle Paul, who met Jesus personally, understood the meaning of 'the message of the cross'. So, the Apostle Paul did not ask Jesus to show signs like the Jews in the text or to understand them logically like the Greeks.

In fact, we cannot know or explain everything we experience, hear, and see in life, because human beings live with limitations. Nevertheless, human beings want to be able to define and understand for themselves all things in the world.

But what we need to know is that no human wisdom can precede the wisdom of the Lord. So, what we need is faith in the Lord rather than efforts to understand everything in the world. For no human wisdom can precede the wisdom of the Lord.

However, there is only one way for a weak human to get the right answers in life. It is when we come to know the sacrifice and love of the Lord found in the cross of Jesus Christ. We should be able to look to the Lord with the eyes of faith, rather than trying to find all answers in life.

So, what is 'the message of the cross' that the Apostle Paul preached to the people of Corinth?



Body: 'The Message of the Cross' preached by the Apostle Paul

Most Christians are aware that Jesus was crucified, but few take it seriously. Not because of lack of faith, but because it is not easy to understand the death of Jesus on the cross. We already know the answer doctrinally; that is, Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins.

However, this answer is not convincing for everyone. It is difficult for the world to accept that the death of a young Jewish man on the cross is the only way for humankind to be saved.

Moreover, Jesus' crucifixion was the punishment given a heinous sinner, so it was far from the punishment given a good person. So, early Christians lived their lives while receiving scorn from the world because they believed that Jesus, who was crucified was the son of God.

Paul speaks of the attitude of such people in **1 Corinthians 1:22-23**. **“For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.”**

What is the lesson the Apostle Paul was trying to convey to us through this verse?

1. Jews looking for signs and Greeks looking for happiness

In the above verse, the Apostle Paul says that the religious characteristic of the Jews is to seek a sign. The sign the Jews sought here refers to a supernatural miracle. Examples of these signs are the parting of the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus, and manna and quail, which were the food of the Israelites in the wilderness.

However, the sign-seeking faith was regarded as important not only for the Jews, but in all areas of human life. The same is true today. In fact, at the bottom of the sign-seeking faith lies eagerness for success. Therefore, from the point of view of faith seeking a sign, Jesus' death on the cross is an object of scorn because it was forsaken by God.

Paul also mentions Greeks in the above verse. The Apostle Paul says that Jews seek signs and Greeks seek wisdom. The wisdom the Apostle Paul refers to here refers to Greek philosophy -- philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle are all Greek. The ancient Greeks sought the truth, and according to that tradition, today's knowledge of science developed. Even from the standpoint of those who seek this logical and rational truth, Jesus' death on the cross is considered foolish.

But in the end, the reason the Jews sought a sign was to satisfy their own desires. At that time, the Jews demanded that Jesus be the political Messiah. They also wanted Him to heal their ailments and give them strength in their difficult households. They followed Jesus, hoping that the Lord's power would solve their difficult problems.

And the Greeks sought wisdom to pursue their own happiness. To such people, the cross was nothing but foolishness.

However, Christians must follow the word of the cross. Although the message of the cross sometimes seems incomprehensible and foolish, it is the truth that believers who are being saved must believe and follow. Ultimately, the message of the cross is the way to follow the will of the Lord beyond our desires and happiness.

2. The Power of God Discovered in the Cross

However, they did not know it at the time, but as time passed, the disciples realized that Jesus' death on the cross was not an object of scorn or foolishness, but rather the power of God. This is also true of the Apostle Paul. The same is true for those of us who are moving toward the maturity of our faith.

So, in verses 18 and 24 of today's text, the Apostle Paul says: **“the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (v.18) but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ has the power of God and the wisdom of God. (v.24)”**



Are the above verses of the Apostle Paul true? Or is it a message of blessing to believers who are having difficulties in their religious life? In the expression 'the message of the cross' in verse 18 above, is a translation of the Greek word 'logos.' In other words, 'the message of the cross' refers to 'the word about the cross.' Also, 'Christ' in verse 24 refers to the 'Crucified Christ' expressed in verse 23. Both verses refer to Jesus' death on the cross

However, Christians often misunderstand the phrase "the power of God" in verse 24. First, we believe that if we believe in Jesus, we will be blessed with the power of God and live a comfortable life. And even if we suffer in this world, we think that we will go to heaven and live happily with the power of God after death. Of course, I believe in the Lord who meets the needs of the frail human beings living in this world. I also believe in eternal life after death. However, the essential meaning of the words the Apostle Paul mentioned through the text today, the message of the cross is the dedicated Love of Jesus to us.

There are many verses in the Bible that tell us what the love of the Lord is. The reason Jesus bore the cross is, **"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."** (John 3:16)

And the love of the Lord takes the fear out of our hearts. **"There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."** (1 John 4:18)

Furthermore, the love of the Lord leads us to the Christian life of faith. **"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."** (Galatians 2:20)

Conclusion: 'The Message of the Cross', the love of God

Now let's summarize today's sermon. The message of the cross speaks of God's sacrificial love. The Lord's sacrificial love is the means of salvation and healing. All conflicts and sufferings come from sin, and the essence of sin is a break from God, the source of love, and a selfish heart seeking human righteousness and self-interest. Because of these sins, we are cut off from God and our neighbors.

The essence of sin is that man forsakes the riches of God's infinite grace and claims his own righteousness to live by his own strength. Although we are allowed the infinite abundance of the grace of God, man himself has moved from that place of abundance to a finite place. So, what we can enjoy is limited, so we try to increase our own by taking away what is from our neighbors. Thus, conflicts, wars, and hardships arise in us.

Therefore, we need the love of Jesus to move us from these finite lives to an abundant infinite life. Because the love Jesus showed us is not to fill our shortcomings by taking away from others, rather it is a love that fills our shortcomings by giving Himself up. So, the love that God gave His Son, Jesus, on the cross is the only way to save us. May we all enjoy the abundant love of Jesus on the cross. Amen!

